

# Without budget, state to send layoff notices soon

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OLYMPIA — With a budget deal still elusive, thousands of state employees will start receiving notice next week that they may be temporarily laid off on July 1 unless Washington lawmakers reach agreement soon.

Budget negotiators and leaders have been meeting with Gov. Jay Inslee, sometimes daily, since the second special session started at the end of last month. But all parties have remained silent recently about progress, or the lack thereof, on their efforts to reach a deal on a new two-year operating budget.

Even as officials plan for a potential partial shutdown, Gov. Jay Inslee does not believe that will happen, spokesman David Postman said Tuesday.

“The consequences are too great,” Postman said Tuesday. “History is on our side. It’s never happened. We think there will be some agreement before then.”

Washington state has never had a government shutdown. But the Legislature has taken its budget talks to the brink before, including two years ago, when Gov. Jay Inslee signed a budget June 30.

State officials say more than 26,000 state employees would be affected by a government shutdown. Many notices will start going out Tuesday, Postman said.

Officials from the governor’s budget office have already released a contingency plan on what state offices may have to close completely if a budget isn’t signed into law before midnight June 30, when the current two-year budget ends.

Under the government shutdown contingency plan that is currently on the Office of Financial Management’s website, all of the state’s universities and community colleges would remain open. But agencies like the Liquor Control Board, state parks and state Lottery would face a complete shutdown, while others like the governor’s office, the Department of Social & Health Services, and Department of Corrections would face a partial shutdown. Among those offices that would remain open are the Department of Transportation, the Traffic Safety Commission and the Office of the Treasurer.

Under Corrections’ partial shutdown plan, new offenders would remain in county jails instead of being moved to men and women’s prison reception centers, and community supervision for all offenders would cease, except for out-of-state offenders supervised under an interstate compact.

A total of 3,000 of the agency’s 8,000 employees are expected to receive temporary

layoff notices next week if a budget deal isn't made, Corrections spokesman Andrew Garber said.

The Democratic-controlled House and Republican-controlled Senate have been locked in budget negotiations for several weeks. They are currently in a second overtime legislative session after adjourning both a regular 105-day legislative session and a 30-day special session without reaching a budget deal.

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